

JOHN FERON AND HIS 'ADDRESS' ON A VETERINARY INSTITUTION IN EDINBURGH

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INTRODUCTION

Recent research has revealed details of the considerable 'ground work' which preceded the successful establishment of veterinary education in Edinburgh in 1823; this could be traced back more than 120 years, to the late 17th century.¹ However, the earliest pieces of evidence for the first formal teaching of farriery and veterinary medicine in the town are to be found in newspaper advertisements for a series of lectures to be held in Bernard's Rooms, Thistle-street, Edinburgh from the 19th to the 22nd July 1796.^{1,2,3} The lecturer was a French Royalist refugee, John Feron (Jean Féron) who presented himself as 'Professor of Veterinary Medicine'.

In this article we first reproduce the 'Address' he published in 1796.⁴ This would appear to be the printed version of an introductory lecture he had given about one year earlier to a select group of potential patrons in Edinburgh. Thereafter we give an outline sketch of what little is currently known of Monsieur Feron, his career, publications and family. A map, representing Edinburgh at the start of the 19th century, is given to aid the location of places mentioned in the text (Fig. 1).

**AN ADDRESS MOST HUMBLY DEDICATED TO THE SUBSCRIBERS
OF THE VETERINARY INSTITUTION IN THE CITY OF
EDINBURGH: BY M. FERON, FORMERLY EQUERRY AND
PROFESSOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, NANTE IN BRETAGNE,
AND SECOND PROFESSOR OF THE VETERINARY COLLEGE IN
LONDON.**

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY J. MOIR, PATERSON'S COURT,

1796.

Price Three Shillings.



Fig. 1. John Ainslie's (1804) map of Edinburgh showing (AR) Assembly Rooms, George Street; (BR) Bernard's Rooms, Thistle street; (F&I) John Feron's Forge and Infirmary premises at St Anne Street, North Bridge; (TR) The Theatre Royal; and the addresses of a Mrs Feron (1) from 1793-1797, at 16 St. James Square; and of a Mrs Feron (2) from 1800-1804 at the west end Merchant Street; (3) from 1804-1805 fronting Heriot's bridge Grassmarket; (4) from 1806-1807 at Ramsay Garden; (5) from 1807-1809 at 13 Bank Street; (6) from 1809-1811 at Union Street. [Map reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.]

ADDRESS, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

Impressed with the deepest sense of gratitude, for the liberal encouragement which you have been pleased to confer on me, I trust in your goodness, that the motive which induces me to solicit the continuance of the honour of your patronage, and of troubling you with a short account of myself, and of the situation that I have the honour to hold in this Country, will plead my pardon.

Twenty years of theory and experience, is the time I have spent in the best reflected study of the Veterinary Art, and in the attainment of a perfect knowledge of the general laws of animal economy. The ten first years of the above period were employed in the French Regiment of Carabineers, and under the tuition of the celebrated Hypiatre la Fosse. About that time I went to Paris, with the intention of practising the Veterinary Medicine; but a few months after my arrival in that Metropolis, I was requested and prevailed on, by the principal members of the City of Nante in Bretagne, to fix there in the capacity of Equerrer, and to demonstrate, in public, the anatomy of the Horse, &c.; in which I continued under the patronage of that City, until the REVOLUTION of France. At that epocha, *Monsieur de S. Bell*, Professor of Veterinary medicine, with whom I had long corresponded, prevailed on me to go with him to England, to second him in his undertaking of a Veterinary College in London, which I could not refuse, on account of the long friendship that had subsisted between us. That gentleman having obtained the success of that undertaking, I had the honour of being named Second Professor, charged with the general care of the Infirmary, &c.; in which I would, probably, have continued the remainder of my life, had *Monsieur de St. Bell* lived; but a sudden death put an end to his days on the 21st of August 1793, when, three months after, I resolved on leaving that College, for two reasons; the 1st, for having been superceded [sic] in the place of First Professor; and the 2d, to avoid the frightful consequences of a vile jealousy which *Monsieur de St. Bell* fell a sacrifice to. In consequence of this I left London, and went to Dublin, from whence I came to Scotland, in the intention of observing the state of rural economy in these kingdoms; and, in short, whatever has any relation to the principal objects of my favourite profession.

Having communicated my intention to several persons, in different parts of this country, who were pleased to flatter me that, if I would circulate proposals for improving the Veterinary Art, they would be well received, I sent printed letters to the principal families of this city, expressing my wish to render myself as serviceable as my small abilities would permit; but they proved fruitless.

About six weeks after my first disappointment, I proposed to read lectures on the Veterinary Art, and presented a subscription paper to that purpose to several gentlemen, which met with no better success. This did not, however, discourage me: and having had the good fortune to become acquainted with a gentleman, who encouraged me not to despair of success, and who was most kindly pleased to recommend me to a number of worthy families in this city, and its vicinity, I am happy to inform you, Gentlemen, that my perseverance [sic] has all the appearance of being crowned with success, since I have the honour of being patronized by you; an honour which I will, on all occasions, endeavour to merit through my attention to your interest. Permit me, now, Gentlemen, to return to my object, and to demonstrate the utility of a Veterinary Institution in this city, for the benefit of a country wherein horses are of so much importance to the prosperity of it; and to the immense property of cattle: But before I proceed, I think it necessary to give an account of the etymology of the science which I have the honour of professing in this city, in order to satisfy those persons who may incline to study that branch.

The Veterinary Science consists, then, in the art of curing the diseases of cattle, in particular those of horses. The foundations of this art comprehend a perfect knowledge of the animal economy, the arrangement, the order, the direction, and the structure of the bodily parts of the animal; as well as the springs of these parts, in the exercise of their functions. The word veterinary is derived from the Latin, *veterinarius*, and the word hyiatic is a compound term, formed from the Greek, *Hippos*, a horse, and *iatrice*, medicine. Some have derived the word, *Veterinus*, (from whence derive, *Veterinarius*.) from *Vecto*, to carry, *quasi animalia advecturam idonea*; or from, *Vecto veluti veterina, vel veheterina*.

What the true etymon of the word may be, if we consider, without any prejudice, the actual state of that art in this country, it will require no great discernment to describe. Whether the obstacles that are to be overcome in the attaining of it, may, at first, have slackened the courage of the farriers; or rather, that a silly pride, which prevails at this time amongst a crowd of decisive men, whom we meet everywhere, have been the cause of this indifference to acquire it, it is certain that it has not even attained, as yet, the methodical form, in this country, that truly constitutes an Art! Indeed, what can be the consistence of a science drawn on such uncertain facts, by those who have observed and drawn them without order, — the precepts of whom have no consequence, no relationship; who will neither admit and know combination nor consequences, — in short, educated on the foundation of some principles drawn from a general mistaken experience, and which have not even the advantage of being covered with the imposing cloak of the appearance of truth? Is it not shameful to the

hypiatic art, and much to be lamented by the Public, to see horses led every day to these farriers, and other persons infinitely more dangerous, whom the Public trust with their confidence, because they suppose them possessed of some knowledge in that art; not to be cured by them, but to be rendered incurable, and often killed. The poor animal, bereft of speech, cannot tell his complaint; excruciating torments are superadded by the ignorant efforts of those men, who, at first sight, and without investigation to find the cause of the disorder, pronounce a hackneyed common place opinion on the case, and proceed with all expedition to open the veins, lacerate the flesh, cauterise the sinews, and drench the stomach with drugs, entirely adverse to the cure they engage to perform: quantities of cordials are administered in boluses or draughts, the effects of which they wish to see as soon as they are swallowed; and, if they find them too long in operating, or that their operation is too weak, they order the doze to be repeated; when the death of the animal teaches them the remedy has been too strong. These sad errors, exercised on the proprietors of cattle, should be sufficient to prove the necessity of a Veterinary Institution in this City, in order to demonstrate how highly conducive it would be to public good, that all those who practise the Hypiatic Art be instructed, if not to qualify them to perform cures, to prevent them from the mischiefs which they occasion every day, through their unpardonable ignorance. It will never be through an habit imperceptibly acquired, a vague routine, nor through an unestablished practice on sure principles, that we shall arrive to satisfactory solutions of an infinity of problems which Nature presents, every day, to our attention. It is, therefore, but in opening and searching the book of Nature itself, that we shall acquire true knowledge: It will scarcely have shewn itself to us, when all prejudices and illusions will cease: We shall then seek to operate on truth only, on seizing the thread of it; and to follow them as far as it can extend. The Hypiatic Art proposes to itself the preservation of the Horse's body; its objects being to maintain him in a perfect integrity, and in remedying those accidents occasioning the troubles and derangements in the economy of the machine: Therefore, how shall we prevent these troubles, and avoid these derangements, if we are unacquainted with the structure and the functions of the parts that may be affected? The question is, then, to confine our first inquiries to this point: The decomposition of the animal will shew us the knot in which a multitude of important facts are re-united; on this object we ought necessarily to fix, if we wish afterwards to establish and found, with success, our observations on theory, and theory on observations. Many people wish to be learned, but will not give themselves the trouble of learning; others think that the knowledge of the horse is not in the least susceptible of such a study; while, on the other side, the ignorant fancy they see, penetrate, and discover, every thing; others, in short, boast of their experience, and that it is alone sufficient. I allow that experience is of great service; but amongst those who boast the most of it, we

often meet with no more than the name of it. One may, indeed, have seen a great number of horses, without being the wiser of them; because he who sees no other objects but those which unfold to his feeble sight, will never give nor make but frivolous observations. It is, therefore, but through the happy and necessary concurrence of theory and experience, that we shall attain to substitute solid principles to the frivolous and bad founded precepts that have been transmitted to us: It is through the re-union of these two essential parties in the Hipiatic Art, as well as in all other arts, that we shall be able to compare the case, and cease to confine our prescriptions to such and such remedies, in particular, such as are daily practised. The history of the diseases to which a horse is liable, will not only be the faithful portrait of his distresses, but the depositary of the relief he may meet from our industry: We shall bring forth the more certain effects, our first indications being drawn from the essence of the evil itself; and fight no longer against invisible phantoms.

Man, naturally attached to life, has sought every means that could perpetuate his existence; self-interest has armed his curiosity; he perceived that he could not find resources against the inseperable [sic] infirmities of his being, but by knowing the motions, the springs, and the structures of the parts which the animal machine contains. At first he penetrated but grossly into the interior of his fellow creature; his steps were afterwards more reflected; a meditated examination unravelled some agents to him; he discovered, by degrees, the communication of the action of these parts that support and lend themselves mutual assistance; with the aid of experience he attempted to get hold of the thread that leads into this labyrinth; and his digested discoveries in physical knowledge, in opening his eyes, placed him, as we may say, in certain regards, near the origin of Nature. From thence the rapid progress that has been made in the art of healing; the perfection to which surgery is arrived, a science, the certitude of which is evident and demonstrated: Clear and mechanical explications of all that the horse may have analogous to us, will conduct us to the same principles. Why should we disdain to sound the interior of them? Why should we neglect the penetrating of the parts that compose it? To compare them; to distinguish them; to examine the dependencies and the harmony of them; the dissonancies [sic]; the places and limits? All these particulars, which have proved a happy and useful spring to mankind, can prove no less serviceable to an animal, which must be considered as of the greatest use to him, in agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and pleasure; and whose parts are similar to his own.

As the proper treatment of distempers in horses, and of other cattle, is of the highest commercial and domestic importance, it is incumbent on this Nation to institute and protect a veterinary school, wherein their anatomical construction,

the diseases to which they are subject, and the proper remedies to be applied, may be regularly taught. Such an institution cannot fail to prove of general use to the enlightened practitioners, on whose care and skill they may securely rely.

I will not trouble you, Gentlemen, any farther on this subject, but conclude with a few questions and answers on the innumerable difficulties that I shall have to overcome, concerning my new method of shoeing the different feet; which some, through jealousy, and others, through ignorance, will endeavour to disapprove, by a number of objections which I will anticipate, not through any fear of being counterbalanced in my principles, but to fulfil any duties towards the respectable Society which honours me with its confidence; and to prove, that my answers are founded on the principles of the anatomy of the foot of the horse, without which none but frivolous observations can be made. A great number of these objectors, who, to prove their knowledge, are continually attesting a long practice, demonstrate, by their ignorance, that the work of hands will never lead to any thing, unless it is supported by study and by reflection.

1st Objection, – That a horse being shod short, the heels will wear out. To which I answer, that the heels will never wear out to the quick, their substance being of a nature always growing faster than they can wear; the proof of which must appear evident to any person who will take the trouble to observe, that when horses with strong heels go to be shod, the farrier is obliged to take from them. I agree, however, that a horse may wear his heels if he goes swimming, as it often happens among those who have been foundring [sic].

2d Objection, – That by not paring the heels, bleims, or, what the farriers call it, corns, are occasioned. To which I answer, that bleims, which attack strong heels, never happen but when the binders have been pared to the quick, as the most part of farriers do every day; in that case, the air penetrates into it, deprives it of its suck, and dries it up; the sole presses the vessels, and the blood extravates, which forms the redness called bleim, or corn. This kind of bleim will never make a horse lame; but when some matter is formed in the part, which very seldom happens, the quarter, having no support, contracts sometimes, compresses the laminated substance, and occasions that redness.

The 3d Objection will be, – That the frogg must be fatigued and destroyed, because the horse walks upon it. To which I beg leave to reply, and to refer to experience, that no horse, shod after that method, has hitherto shewn the smallest inconvenience for walking on the frogg; and when we consider the particular structure of that part, it will be found very improbable, it being composed of a soft, spungy [sic], and flexible substance, which, from its natural spring, yields to the weight of the body, at the instant the horse puts his foot on

the ground, and recovers as quickly. There is, however, one case, from which a horse may be lamed by walking on the frogg, which is, when that part is hard and dry. My observations on the anatomy of the foot have shewn me that the animal, by leaning on the ground, forces against the expansion of the tendon of the flex or muscle of the foot to which it is fastened; but by taking off the small end of that hard frogg, I will answer that the horse shall not be lame. In short, be persuaded, that when the frogg is raised too much above the ground, the horse is in the same case as you would be, if obliged to walk on tiptoes: You cannot but be sensible how much this fault contributes to ruin the legs.

The 4th Objection will be, – That, through the means of this shoeing, the frogg will be more subjected or exposed to running thrusses, or even cancers. My answer to this objection is, that this accident, (unfortunately too frequent) never happens but when the frogg is cut to the quick; the binders and heels carried off, (abominable methods of the farriers) without reflecting on the length of time that Nature requires to reproduce them; that these essential parts, destined by Nature to serve as a foundation to the support of the four columns, ought to be scrupulously preserved, in order to resist the humours that abound at all times in too great quantities, and occasion irritations and inflammations [sic] in the feet; corrode their substance, and extend sometimes as far as the fetlock, which occasions insupportable pains, taken, by the ignorant farriers, for rheumatism in the shoulders; and that this accident would never happen, if they did not pare the frogg nor the heels. The buttress should never touch them, except when they are too high; it is then indispensibly [sic] necessary to take something off them, but it should always be done sparingly, even, and never obliquely, nor inward; they will, then, avoid the disorder we are speaking off [sic]; but time, and perseverance in my principles of shoeing, will evince the truth of what I have suggested.

The 5th Objection will be started by a number of pretending connoisseurs, who will take upon them to suggest, that the flexor muscle of the bone of the foot, or the back sinews, is stretched, and suffers on account of the frogg bearing on the pavement. I answer to this, that it is diametrically the contrary; and I will prove it by the following short argument, of the effects which the weight of the body has on those sinews.

If a Horse is shod with high heels, such as we see practised every day, we shall find a great distance between the frogg and the pavement; and, of course, the weight of the body falls on the high heels; the frogg, which is upward, yields, the heel extends; and if, unfortunately, the horse makes a violent, sudden start, the rupture of those sinews is almost inevitable, because the frogg cannot reach the pavement to assist the sinews, to which it should be a point of support;

if the sinews do not break, the horse will be a long time lame, on account of the fibres, which were in danger to be broken by the great extension which they suffered. If a horse is shod very thick in the quarter and heels, the same inconvenience will attend it; but if, on the contrary, his shoes are proportioned, by diminishing the thickness of them gradually from the toe to the heel, the frog, which bears a great part of the horse's weight, yields at each step, and returns, by its spring, to its proper substance; by which means the fibres of this flexor muscle will be free from an accident, in case of a sudden or a violent effort.

The 6th Objection, – Some will think that they are shewing great knowledge, in suggesting that a horse will be subject to pick up nails in the street, because the frog touches the ground. I have but two words in reply to this: viz. As I do not pare the foot to the quick, as the farrier generally does, I shall preserve the sole of the foot, which, retaining always its whole strength, will, of course, be less susceptible of being pierced, than when nearly taken off with the buttress [sic].

The 7th Objection will be, – That a horse shod short cannot be at his ease. *Answer*, If the horse, so shod, goes uneasy or lame, the fault cannot be attributed to the shoeing, however short it may be, but rather to the consequences of the different accidents arising from the common shoeing of the farriers: such as, 1st, The foot too pinched: 2d, The pricking: 3d, The nail pinching the laminated substances: 4th, The shoe which presses the horny sole: 5th, The quarter and heels of the shoe pressing on weak heels: 6th, When the sole is burnt: 7th, The strokes of the buttress, which may have hurt the fleshy sole, and carried off the binders, &c.

By my method I avoid all these accidents. 1st, That the heels be not crushed, because I put no iron, or very little to them. 2d, I preserve the sole, against which I use no buttress [sic], because I take nothing off them, but what comes off naturally: 3d, The fleshy sole is never burnt nor hurt from the buttress [sic], because I do not use it: 4th, I avoid the three other accidents by that method; and I defy that a horse, who has a good foot, can be lamed from it, however short he may be shod: experience will convince those who shall have the courage to adopt it.

The 8th Objection is the triumph of bad practitioners; such as farriers, coachmen, and others, little instructed with the movement or progression of the animal, who suppose that horses, who are not shod with high heels, are more liable to slide. If I was obliged to represent all the accidents that these wretched high heels occasion every day, the detail of them would be too tedious, because

it would lead me to prove that they are diametrically contrary to the progression; a detail which I shall defer to a future work: I shall only say, in the mean while, and in reply to these ignorant objectors, that the inconveniences which they pretend to result therefrom, will never permit me to deviate from my method; 1st, Because high heels are fatiguing; they ruin a horse; they put him out of the position in which he ought to be; they precipitate him on the toe, and throw him insensibly on his fetlock: 2d, The point of support is distant from the ground; in that situation the carronar bone weighs on the sinews of the flexor muscle of the foot, and stretches it until the frogg has attained the ground. If the distance proves too considerable, the sinews must either break, or its fibres, which have been considerably stretched, bring forth a swelling from the knee to the heel, (which the farriers call, "strain in the back sinews;") and is always more or less dangerous, because it is accompanied by great inflammations [sic] through the muscular system, that render the horse more or less lame. In short, I shall prove that many fine able horses perish from the rupture of the carronar bone; and even of the bone of the foot. So many accidents might, one would think, be sufficient to reject, for ever, so sad an error, particularly as experience will prove, that the more the frogg and the heels touch the ground, the steadier a horse will be; and that he will be much less liable to slide, than if he was shod with high heels; even on high descents, or on strong drawing back, that he will be incumbered [sic] with much less iron; and I will maintain, that if he could do without any at all, he would be less subject to slide.

The 9th Objection shall be, — That such light and concave shoes will wear out too soon: I have no objection to agree with them in that respect; but I will ask them, if they would prefer to have their horses lame six months of the year, rather than pay the expense of sixteen or twenty shoes more in the space of twelve months.

I have, so far, troubled you, Gentlemen, with these observations, and will now conclude with my answer to those persons, who, no doubt, will wish to know the use and the advantage of the concave shoe which I recommend.

It is in the intention of imitating Nature, to which we ought at all times to conform. I shall have the honour to demonstrate to you, in my anatomical lectures on the foot of the horse, that the horney sole presents always a concavity more or less great: This shape answers two purposes, both of which Nature evidently designed in so constructing it. The one purpose is, to make the tread of the foot bear equally on all the points of its circumference; and, at the same time, to raise the sole above the ground, in such a manner as to protect it from the violent pressure which would otherwise have unavoidably injured the

tender parts contained within the hoof. The other purpose is, to encrease [sic] the firmness of the foot on the ground.

A Veterinary Institution being established in the City of Edinburgh, and taught scientifically, men of liberal education will then cease to look on Veterinarian Medecine [sic] as a mean and degrading profession; they will be convinced that its inferiority to human medicine consists not in the arts themselves, but in the relative importance of their respective subjects; and it deserves to be considered as a distinguished science, occupying an eminent station in the scale of natural knowledge.

It is evident, therefore, that Veterinary Medecine [sic] requires a degree of knowledge of no less extent than that which is exercised upon the human body; and we may venture to assert, without infringing on the respect due to the latter, that the former is in very many instances obliged to engage in more minute researches, and in longer and more laborious investigation: it is not, like human medecine [sic], limited to the study of one species only, it comprehends the care of every kind of useful animal; the preservation of which forms its peculiar province. It is indeed true, that researches multiplied in the examination of different subjects, whose respective mechanism all conspire to produce nearly the same effects, afford great advantages to the veterinary physician, by enabling him, from comparison, to throw additional light on many subjects.

REGULATIONS FOR THE INFIRMARY

- I. The Infirmary shall be open for the reception of Lamé and Sick Horses, or other animals belonging to the Subscribers.
- II. Several stalls shall be kept vacant for the purpose of admitting horses in every acute or accidental case.
- III. The food shall be ordered every day by M. Feron, according to the state of the patient: No person, even the owner himself, shall have the liberty of increasing or lessening the portion ordered: this article must be observed with the most rigid exactness.
- IV. When horses, &c. are taken from the Infirmary, the expences, either of keeping or shoeing, shall be paid by the groom, or other person taking the animal from thence, before it shall be delivered to him.
- V. If any animal die in the Infirmary, the body shall belong to M. Feron, and it shall be opened for the particular instruction of the pupils, or the proper satisfaction of the owner.
- VI. The price of keeping horses in the Infirmary shall be two shillings *per* day.
- VII. The price of shoeing horses by Mr Feron's new method, shall be three shillings.

VIII. M. Feron shall take every possible pains to perfect any person desirous of becoming a pupil, in the Art of the Veterinary Medicine.

SUBSCRIBERS' NAMES

Earl Dalhousie,	£.2 2s
Lord Elphinston	5 5
Lord Rollo	5 5
Sir H. Moncrieff Welwood, Bart.	2 2
Major General Sir James Stewart, Bart.	5 5
Sir James Stirling	3 3
Major General Drummond	2 2
Thomas Muir, Esq;	2 2
Colonel Hamilton,	5 5
George Ramsay, Esq;	5 5
James Mansfield, Esq;	5 5
William Ramsay, jun. Esq;	5 5
Andrew Bonnar, Esq;	5 5
Peter Ramsay, Esq;	5 5
Captain Thomas Robertson, Esq;	1 1
Alexander Charles Maitland, Esq;	2 2
Samuel Anderson, Esq;	1 1
Alexander Oswald, Esq;	1 1
William Maxwell, Esq;	2 2
J. Gordon, Esq;	2 2
Archibald Campbell, Esq;	2 2
James Ker, Esq;	1 1
George Baillie, Esq;	3 3
Andrew Houstoun, Esq;	1 1
D. Monro Binning, Esq;	2 2
William Murray, Esq;	1 1
Major Hay,	2 2

[Added in manuscript:]

f. Charteris	2 2
Sir James Hall	2 2
Hon. Ramsay Maule	5 5

[Total subscribed: £90, 6s.]

[Watermark '& Co 1795' on pp. 6, 7, 13, 16, 32]

National Library of Scotland: 5.1693 (36).

DISCUSSION

Who was John Feron? His place and exact date of birth currently remain a mystery. From his British Army and death records he appears to have been born in France about 1751.^{5,6} Nothing has so far been found to permit a description of his early life, although it may reasonably be assumed that his name in France was Jean Féron. From about the age of 20 until he was about 30 years old Feron reported that he served in the 'Regiment of Carabineers' (named the 'Corps des carabiniers de Monsieur le Comte de Provence' from 1758-1774 and renamed 'Carabiniers de Monsieur' from 1774-1791). During this period he also said he was taught by the celebrated 'Hypiatre la Fosse' (Philippe-Étienne La Fosse, 1738-1820) who left France in 1777 for four years and subsequently became 'vétérinaire en chef au corps des carabiniers' following his return.⁷ It is of interest to note that Feron reported that he then served in the 'capacity of Equerrer' 'to demonstrate, in public, the anatomy of the Horse, &c' in the city of Nantes (from about 1780-1789) where approximately 200 years later (1979) a National Veterinary School was established.

Feron states that he left France at the start of the Revolution (1789), to come to England at the behest of Benoit Charles Marie Vial (Sain Bel) who had arrived in England in 1788.⁸ Feron's role in England would seem to have been to assist Sain Bel with the establishment of the London Veterinary School (in 1791). Sadly, however, Feron's claim that he 'had the honour of being named Second Professor [of the London School], charged with the general care of the Infirmary, &c' is not evident in the histories of the London Veterinary College.⁸⁻¹⁰

Feron says he left London in late November or early December 1793 (three months after the death of Vial on 21st August) and travelled first to Dublin, and then north to Edinburgh in 1794. At this time foreigners were required to register with the town authorities, but Feron's name does not appear on the (incomplete) lists that remain^{11,12}. Similarly, his name does not appear in the Edinburgh Directories. However, from 1793-94 to 1796-97, a Mrs Fearon is listed for the first time as living at 16 St James's Square in Edinburgh's New Town (Fig. 1. 1).¹³⁻¹⁷ It is not clear if this refers to his wife and is a misspelling of Feron, or refers to another person altogether. This was the period of time when Feron reported he had been communicating, by conversations, correspondence and printed proposals, his offer to 'read lectures on the Veterinary Art' in the town. The first of these lectures appears to have been the above 'Address', and it would seem to have been given sometime in 1794 or 1795, at an as yet unknown Edinburgh location, with subsequent publication in 1796.⁴ In June and July of 1796 Feron advertised in the local press that his

series of public lectures was to be given during July in Bernard's Rooms, Thistle-street, in Edinburgh's New Town (Fig. 1. BR).^{1,2,3} By this time, Feron had fitted up a forge and opened an infirmary for the reception of sick or lame horses in a stable building under the North Bridge (Fig. 1. F&I).^{1,3} Later that summer Feron gave a second series of lectures on farriery and veterinary care while working with the cavalry at West Barns, East Lothian, under the command of Major General Sir James Stewart.^{1,18,19}

Sometime during the autumn or winter of 1796 Feron appears to have returned to London 'where some important business had compelled him to go'.^{1,18} This is about the time that various pieces of evidence suggest that a daughter, Elizabeth Feron, was born.^{20,21} However, he makes no mention of this family matter, saying instead that 'the most essential [business] of which was, to pass his Examination before the Medical Committee of that Capital'.^{1,18} It is not immediately clear what he means by this. Upon his return to Edinburgh, in 1797[?], Feron wrote to the 'Subscribers of his Veterinary Institution, that he was ready to receive Pupils, in order to teach the Anatomy of the Horse, and the Veterinary Medicine'.^{1,18} However, nothing seems to have come of this venture. The next sight we have of Feron is his enrolment in the London Veterinary College in July 1799 and the receipt of his veterinary diploma on the 12th October of that year.²² Within two weeks, on the 24th October, at the age of 48, he signed up as a veterinary surgeon staff officer in the British Army, with the 13th Regiment Light Dragoons.^{23,24} Descriptions of the uniforms worn by Regimental Veterinary Surgeons and other staff officers in the Dragoons during the French Revolution and Napoleonic War period have been given (in part) by Smith.²⁵

The rest of Feron's veterinary career appears to have been based with the British army, and can be summarised as follows. At the time when he joined, the 13th Regiment Light Dragoons was being largely raised anew following terrible losses in the West Indies due to sickness. The rebuilt regiment comprised 802 men and the same number of horses.²⁴ During the period 1800-1805 the regiment saw no active service on the continent of Europe, being trained and retained in Britain for defensive and parade duties; the troops were quartered in various towns in England.²⁴ On the 1st August 1805 Feron was transferred to the 12th (Prince of Wales) Regiment Light Dragoons and remained with them as the regimental Veterinary Surgeon for four years.^{26,27} Again he saw no active service. The available evidence indicated that he did not participate in the disastrous Walcheren Expedition in Holland during the summer of 1809. The 12th Light Dragoons had been deployed there, to be on the Right wing of the army, but Feron, like the rest of the regiment never left ship. Over 4000 of the almost 40,000 troops who landed and took part in this

expedition died of malaria, and many more thousands were severely debilitated.²⁸ On the 17th August 1809, Feron was transferred again, this time to the 15th Regiment (The King's) Hussars.^{29,30} He replaced James Castley who had just returned from active service with the regiment in Corunna, northern Spain.³¹ Feron remained with the 15th Regiment in Britain, where it had been given ceremonial functions to perform in London, as well as disturbance control duties in both London and the manufacturing districts of the Midlands and the North of England.³² It is possible that Feron sailed for Lisbon with the main body of the regiment in January 1813.³³ However, he was disbanded, on half pay, on the 29th April 1813 before there was any engagement with the enemy.^{29,30,34} He was replaced as the regimental Veterinary Surgeon by Conrad Dalwig, who was subsequently listed as 'serving with the 15th in the Peninsular War during 1813-14'.³⁵

Feron wrote about farriery and the veterinary medicine of horses, cattle and other domestic animals during his time in the army. His book,³⁶ first published in 1803 and dedicated to his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Bolton, was republished seven years later under a different title and with a dedication to the commanding officer of the 12th Regiment of Dragoons (and mentor from his time in Edinburgh) Colonel Sir James Stewart, Bart.³⁷ The book has been critically described as 'a protracted and weary flow of invective against the existing practitioner and a puff of the "judicious methods" of Mr Coleman'.³⁸ Smith went on to declare the whole book as 'worthless'. Nevertheless, extracts were made by Schwab and republished in 1813, in German, for student use.³⁹

With respect to John Feron's family life in the 1800s, only a few specific pieces of information have been discovered in the archives so far. On the 29 May 1800 Feron married Letitia Hoggins in Coventry.⁴⁰ At the time he was aged about 49 and Letitia was 18 years old. They had a son one year later, also named John Feron.⁴¹ A daughter, also named Letitia, was born sometime between 1809 and 1811.^{42,43} The Directories for Edinburgh listed a Mrs Feron living in the west end of Merchant Street, near Candlemaker Row in the Old Town from 1800-1804 (Fig. 1. 2), and then 'fronting Heriot's bridge' in the Grassmarket (1804-1805) (Fig. 1. 3).⁴⁴⁻⁴⁸ She did not appear in the Directories for 1805-1806, but had returned in 1806-1807 and was living in Ramsay Gardens at the top of the Mound (Fig. 1. 4).^{49,50} Mrs Feron was then listed as living at 13 Bank Street for the years 1807-1809 (Fig. 1. 5), and in Union Street for the following two years (1809-1811) (Fig. 1. 6).⁵¹⁻⁵⁴ At no time between 1800 and 1811 has any mention been found of John Feron's presence in Edinburgh. And yet people in the town were respectfully aware of him.⁵⁵ There is every likelihood that he regularly returned to Edinburgh on leave from military service.

It is during this period (1808-09) that evidence is first available extolling the (child prodigy) singing ability of his daughter, Elizabeth Feron.^{56,57} An illustration of her performing 'The Romp; or, the great Catalani ... [to] unprecedented applause ... at Vauxhall Gardens' was published (Fig. 2).⁵⁸ Several years later, there is newspaper and other evidence of her singing in the Assembly Rooms (Fig. 1 AR) and Theatre Royal (Fig. 1 TR) in Edinburgh.^{55,59} ⁶¹ As a teenager she had been trained under violinist Charles Cobham and his wife, and had performed in concert with the former.^{51,53,55,56} After Whitsunday 1811 there is no further mention of Mrs Feron in the Edinburgh Directories. This is the time when the young Elizabeth Feron began touring theatres and opera houses in the south.⁶²⁻⁶⁴ The following year she married Joseph Glossop in London.⁶⁵ Elizabeth went on to become an accomplished and popular international opera singer, performing at Covent Garden, La Scala and at various theatres in the United States.⁶⁶⁻⁶⁸ Lastly, no evidence has been found so far to suggest that, following retirement from the army in 1813, John Feron or his family ever returned north to live in Edinburgh.⁶⁹ Indeed there is evidence pointing to the family living south of the Thames in Surrey, in the Lambeth district of London. He died in the Hercules Building, Lambeth on the 6th of February 1824 aged 73 years, and on the 14th of February was buried in the Parish of St Mary's, Lambeth, London.^{67,71}

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

John Feron (c. 1751-1824), a French royalist refugee, made a significant effort, at the end of the 18th century, to introduce veterinary education into Scotland. The currently available evidence suggests that he was the first to offer a series of lectures on farriery and veterinary medicine to the citizens of Edinburgh. He outlined his reasons for wishing to establish a Veterinary Institution in the town, and listed the regulations of its associated Infirmary. However, circumstances at the time were not sufficiently supportive of his plan, and so he joined the British Army as a veterinary surgeon. He appears to have spent the Napoleonic war period based with the 13th, 12th and finally the 15th Regiments of the (light) Dragoons in England. During this period he published a book on farriery, in two editions. His family meantime seems to have lived in Edinburgh, before moving to Lambeth, London, Surrey. Although only fragments of his family life are currently known, these clearly indicate that his daughter, Elizabeth Feron, was a very talented singer.

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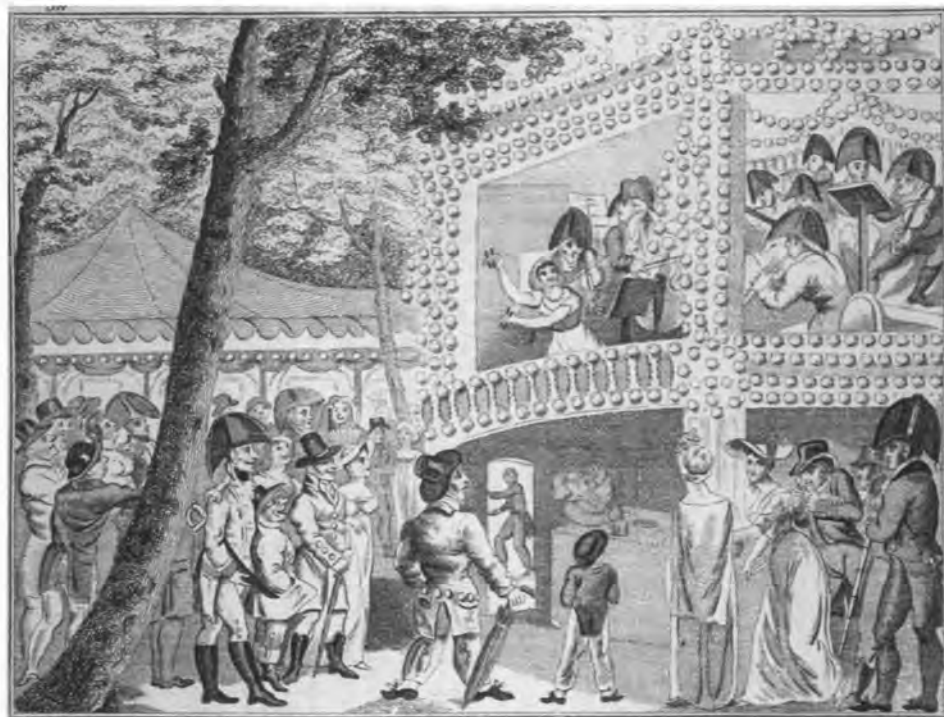


Fig. 2. Feron Singing at Vauxhall Gardens, London from a Poster Dated 25 September 1809. The Cavalryman in the Foreground Leaning Against the Tree Appears to be Dressed in a Uniform Similar to a Regimental Veterinary Surgeon. [Reproduced by Kind Permission of Guildhall Library, City of London.]

Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies; Joe Marshall, Tricia Boyd, Sally Pagan, Denise Anderson, Hazel Robertson, Ann Henderson and Grant Butters of the Centre for Research Collections in Edinburgh University Library; Richard Hunter, Peter Clapham, Vikki Kerr, Pam McNicol, Stefanie Davidson and Joe Peattie of the City of Edinburgh Archives; Jimmy Hogg, Ian Nelson, Darren Black, Eileen Maher, Susan Orlowski, Anne Morrison and Nancy Balfour of the Central Public Library (Edinburgh Room); the librarians of the National Archives of Scotland, National Library of Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland; Jonathan Farmer, Librarian, National Archive, Kew; and Captain G.E Locker and the staff at Home Headquarters The Light Dragoons.

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21. We have also not yet been able to identify the mother of Elizabeth. Elizabeth had been described in opera circles as the child of French refugee parents. It is possible that her mother was French and may have been the Mrs Fearon who came to Edinburgh in 1793. It may not be coincidence that Mrs Fearon did not have a registered address in the Edinburgh Directories for 1797-1798 and 1799-1800 [that for 1798-1799 has not been found]. Perhaps Mrs Fearon died during or after the birth of Elizabeth. Further research, perhaps in France, may shed light on these questions.
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41. According to the International Genealogical Index data (www.familysearch.org - accessed 1 June 2010) [Source Information: Batch No.: C109731, Dates: 1761–1812, Source Call No.: 1305938, Type: Film, Printout Call No.: 6907185], JOHN FARREN [sic], Christening: 29 MAR 1801, Saint Paul, Norwich, Norfolk, England; Parents: Father: JOHN FARREN [sic], Mother: LETITIA HUGGIN [sic].
42. According to the International Genealogical Index data (www.familysearch.org - accessed 1 September 2010) [Source Information: Batch No.: P006282, Dates: 1823–1837, Source Call No.: 0254608-0254612, Type: Film 0820774], LETITIA FERON, Father: JOHN FERON, Mother: LETITIA, Adult Christening 27 FEB 1824, Saint Mary's, Lambeth, London, England.
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55. Manuscript letter from Buchan to an un-named bookseller (William Ford?) dated Edinburgh 14.4.1811. [National Library of Scotland: MS 18000.44] '... This letter in the meantime is meant to draw the Attention of the good People of Manchester to Miss Feron the daughter of the eminent Mr Feron Veterinary Surgeon to His Royal Highness, 15th Regiment of Cavalry, who promises to be an Actress & Singer of *the very first Order*. I asked from Mrs Siddons the Theatre Royal here for a night that I might see her perform In Comic Opera and her admirable Voice so capable of being directed to the highest attainment of Music. The result was that tho [sic] on Maundy Thursday the most unfavourable of all nights in the Year the house was well filled, & the Pit over[er]flowing. ... Mrs Cobham Miss Feron's Instructor is also an Artist of great Merit whom I reccomend [sic] ...'.
56. Vauxhall Gardens, Lambeth, London [Mrs Glossop/Mrs Fearon/Miss Feron] 1808, 1809 'On the evening of the 2d ult. we were regaled with the imitative powers of Miss Feron; but, while they excite our admiration, we cannot help lamenting that those exertions will infallibly, in the end, ruin her voice' [Minet V, f.82] ... Miss Fearon/Feron served her apprenticeship under the violinist Charles Cobham, c.1811. ... Miss Fearon's admission ticket for the 1808 season is in the Gerald Coke Handel Collection at the Foundling Museum, London.
(http://www.vauxhallgardens.com/vauxhall_gardens_singers_page.html - accessed 4 June, 2010).
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58. 'The Romp; or, the great Catalani sung with unprecedented applause by MISS FERON at Vauxhall Gardens. London: Laurie and Whittle, 25th September 1809'; illustrating a performance given by Elizabeth Feron at Vauxhall Gardens. London: Laurie & Whittle. London Metropolitan Archives, Main Print Collection, q9516662
<http://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/collage/app.jsessionid=2DF267E6E811FCA165D0EC550CC769BA?service=external/FullScreenImage&sp=I18%3AFeron%2C+Miss+++++++++++%3A%3AF&sp=15368&sp=X&sp=2>
 It may be no more than whimsy that suggests that the smiling figure standing under the tree, dressed in what seems to be the uniform of a Veterinary Surgeon in the Dragoons, serves to represent her proud father, John Feron.
59. 'ASSEMBLY ROOMS, GEORGE STREET. Tomorrow, Friday, March 22. 1811. Last night of Miss FERON (the English Catalani) and Mr COBHAM's engagement ... when the following GRAND CONCERT will be performed ...' *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Thursday March 21, 1811, p1, c1.
60. 'MISS FERON'S BENEFIT CONCERT, WITH SONGS IN CHARACTER. Theatre-Royal, Head of Leith Walk. Friday, March 29. 1811. ... Mr COBHAM will play a Concerto on the violin.' *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Saturday March 23, 1811, p3, c4.
61. 'Theatre Royal. Only night of Miss FERON singing at the Theatre. This present evening, ...' *Caledonian Mercury*, Thursday April 11, 1811. p1, c1.
62. HOOK, J. (1811?), Beresford and the brave British army. [London]. Cambridge University Library Manuscript MS.Add.6640; p. 46 [Note: Song for voice(s) and keyboard, note at end, '2nd verse Miss Feron, 3rd verse Mrs Mountain or Mrs Garrick'.]
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64. 'The cabinet.' For the benefit of Miss Feron. Theatre Royal, Covent-Garden, June 10, 1812. In 'Album of old playbills (Thx 35771 .999e) 1769-1898. A finding aid prepared by Paula B. Entin and Amy Wasterlain.
http://infoshare1.princeton.edu/rbse2/misc/Bib_2952004.pdf (accessed 18 June 2010)
65. According to the International Genealogical Index data (www.familysearch.org - accessed 1 June 2010) [Source Information: Batch No.: M035243, Dates: 1809-1813, Source Call No.: 942 B4HA V.57, Type: Book, Printout Call No.: 6903615] JOSEPH GLOSSOP's Spouse was ELIZABET FERON, and their marriage was on 13 OCT 1812 Saint Mary-St Marylebone Road, Saint Marylebone, London, England. [Joseph Glossop funded the building of the Royal Coburg Theatre (which later became the

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Royal Victoria Theatre and is now the 'Old Vic') in London, becoming its manager. His marriage to Elizabeth was not a happy one. They had one child, Augustus Frederick Glossop (1825-1873) who later adopted the additional surname Harris. Of his four children, one son became Sir Augustus Harris (1852-1896), Sheriff of London and Manager of the Drury Lane Theatre.]

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67. Elizabeth also studied in Italy where she was the pupil of Vincenzo Pucitta (1778-1861). She sang at La Scala in Milan where she was described as '*prima donna assoluta*'. According to Joy Carden (Music in Lexington before 1840, Cincinnati, USA: C.J. Krehbiel, p. 4., 1980), 'Madame Feron had been a favourite of Italian composer Gioacchino Antonio Rossini. She was described as a woman of genius, an excellent musician, who, according to some, had no competitor.'
68. IRELAND, J.N. (1866). Records of the New York stage from 1750-1860, vol.1. New York: T.H. Morrell, pp. 434, 593-597, 612, 613, 618, 633, 654, 655.
69. A Mrs Fearn or Fearon has been found listed in the Edinburgh Directories as living at 4 Union Street from 1812-1815, an address very similar to that given for Mrs Feron from 1809-1811. In addition, a Mrs Faron or Fearon was found listed in the Edinburgh Directories as living at (112) Laurieston from 1815-1824. However, the Edinburgh Commissary Court records the death on the 19th January 1825 of a Mrs Mary Fearon of the latter address, showing that she was not a relative of John Feron. She was instead the widow of a 'James Fearon, gentleman in London'.
70. ANONYMOUS. (1824), *The Army List, for April, 1824*. London: War Office, p. 80.
71. ANONYMOUS. (1825), 'Casualties since last publication: Deaths', *A list of the officers of the army and Royal Marines, on full, retired and half-pay: with an index*. London: War Office, [p. 815].

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DID YOU KNOW? – Lagon – the flank (Thomas Boardman 1805)